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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/BSC AND G/TIP

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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS GANG TAKEN DOWN IN GOIAS

¶1. (U) Summary: On the week of 11 January, the Brazilian Federal Police (DPF) arrested five persons (four Brazilians, one man and three women, and a Swiss man) who were suspected of trafficking women to Switzerland for prostitution. The four-year-old DPF operation, which was conducted jointly with the Swiss Federal Police, took down a scheme that had resulted in at least 15 women being trafficked to Switzerland. The DPF may make more arrests as it continues to gather evidence both in Brazil and Switzerland. The joint Brazilian-Swiss operation represents another success in Brazil's efforts to expand international cooperation in TIP cases. Post will continue to monitor progress on the case to see whether the arrests lead to indictments and convictions. End Summary.

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Trafficking in Persons and Baby Selling Gang Disrupted  
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¶2. (U) On 14 January, the DPF arrested five persons on suspicions of conspiracy to traffic women to Europe. According to the DPF, the victims were women between the ages of 18 and 28, who were recruited in the towns of Sao Miguel do Passa Quatro, Vianopolis and Anapolis, in the state of Goias. They were then transported through Kubitschek International Airport in Brasilia onward to Switzerland either on a false promise that waitressing jobs awaited them or with the knowledge that they would work as prostitutes. At least two members of the gang had been previously arrested in November 2008 in connection to a scheme to buy a baby for R\$20,000 (US\$8,600) to sell to a Swiss couple and were free on bail at the time of their 14 January arrest.

¶3. (U) The gang worked with individuals in Switzerland who were responsible for the recruited Brazilian women and acted as pimps for them there. The Swiss Federal Police intends to question individuals involved in the scheme in coming days, according to DPF officials. Although the DPF cited at least 15 cases of women being trafficked by this group, they believe that the actual number may have been higher, particularly as the gang was highly experienced and may have been operating for a long time. Furthermore, the DPF believes that the gang received more than R\$1 million (US\$ 430,000) for its crimes, but that the amount was almost certainly much higher.

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Cooperation with Swiss  
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¶4. (U) According to the DPF officers working on the case, two

Brazilian Federal Police officers were sent to Switzerland to continue to collect evidence and to interview victims. One victim who still resides in Switzerland asked for protection for her family in Goias before talking to police. The DPF noted that the Brazilian Interpol office was working with Swiss authorities and that further arrests could be forthcoming.

15. (U) This is at least the third time in the last two years that the Federal Police worked with Swiss authorities to disrupt a trafficking in persons gang. Previously, both entities had worked together during Operation Fassini in 2005, which resulted in the conviction of Swiss citizen Robert Alfred Suter in Brazil for involvement in the international trafficking of women, and Operation Taro in 2006, which broke a gang that was trafficking women in a route from Minas Gerais to Switzerland that had trafficked 300 women to work as sex slaves.

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Comment:  
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16. (U) It is encouraging to see the DPF take actions against a trafficking in persons gang. The issue now is whether the Public Ministry will have enough evidence to indict and obtain a conviction of the members of the gang -- never a sure thing. In a country where glitzy headlines of arrests in all manner of police operations infrequently lead to convictions, trafficking in persons cases are even harder than most cases for Brazilian authorities to prosecute since

BRASILIA 00000102 002 OF 002

witnesses often are unwilling to testify for fear of reprisals. In the cases where the trafficking was consensual -- where the women knew the intended outcome of their travel -- most often the women involved will not testify. Despite the open question of whether indictments will follow, the arrest demonstrates that Brazil is routinely running joint operations with foreign partners in a concerted effort to pursue trafficking cases (i.e. the three cases with Switzerland, as well as a case it worked with Italy to take down an underage sexual tourism conspiracy in Fortaleza in 2004). This type of enhanced international cooperation will be essential for Brazil to increase the rate of arrests and convictions in these cases. Post will continue to monitor progress on the case to see whether the arrests lead to indictments and convictions. End Comment.  
KUBISKE